

UK Patent Application (12) GB 2 353 128 (13) A

(43) Date of A Publication 14.02.2001

(21) Application No 0021553.3

(22) Date of Filing 01.09.2000

(71) Applicant(s)

Mazooma Games Limited
(Incorporated in the United Kingdom)
Merkur House, Bowbridge Road, NEWARK,
NG24 4BZ, United Kingdom

(72) Inventor(s)

Alan Claypole
Mark Hulse

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service

Barker Brettell
138 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, BIRMINGHAM,
B16 9PW, United Kingdom

(51) INT CL⁷
G07F 17/34

(52) UK CL (Edition S)
G4V VAA V118

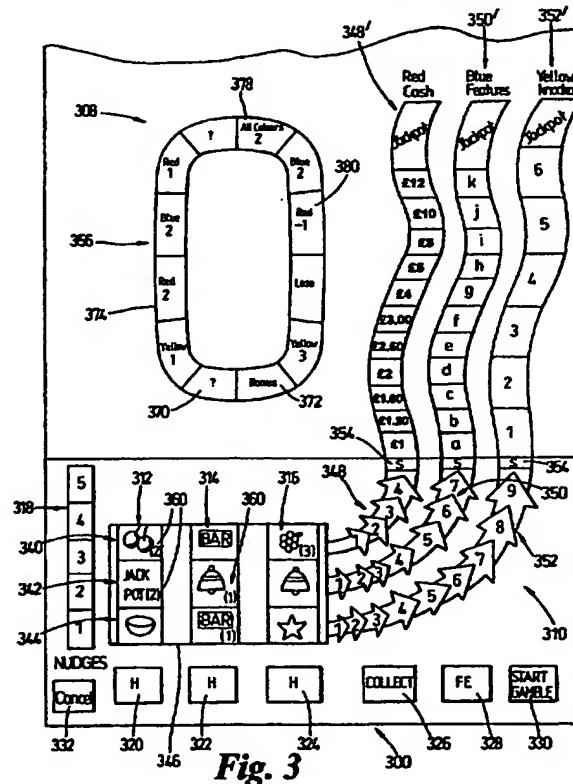
(56) Documents Cited
GB 2333880 A GB 2230373 A

(58) Field of Search
UK CL (Edition R) G4V
INT CL⁷ G07F 17/32 17/34
Online: WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO

(54) Abstract Title

Amusement machine with trails

(57) An amusement machine 300 has a reel display 346, a plurality of trails 348, 350, 352 along which a player can progress dependant upon points awarded via symbols 360 in the reel display, and a plurality of trail contribution lines 340, 342, 344 in the reel display, each contribution line contributing to a respective individual trail. The machine may include nudge and hold features 320, 322, 324 which enable a player to control the position of each reel. The machine may include a track feature 356 and secondary trail features 348', 350', 352'.



GB 2 353 128 A

1/3

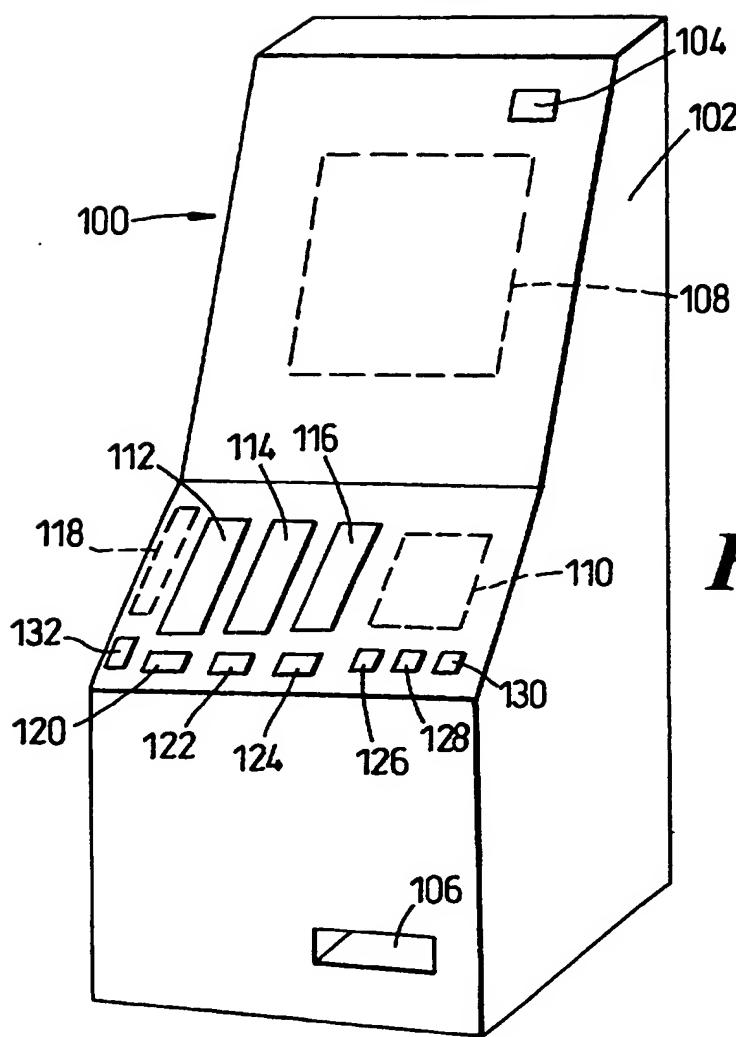


Fig. 1

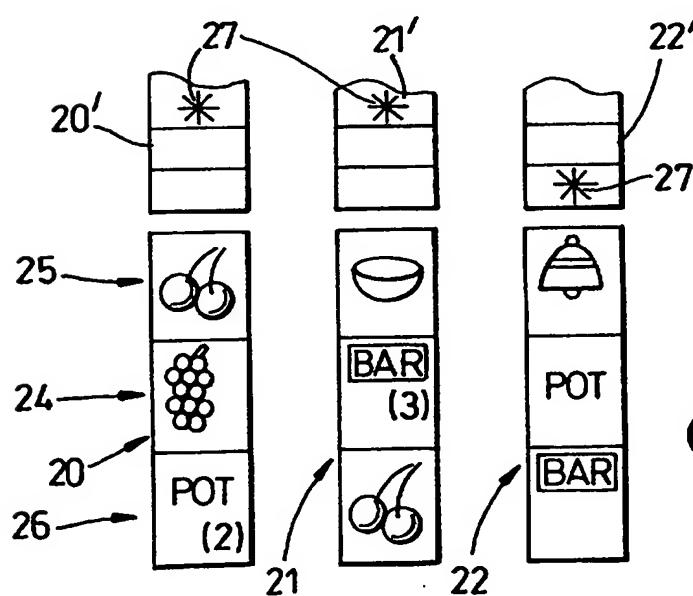


Fig. 2
(PRIOR ART)

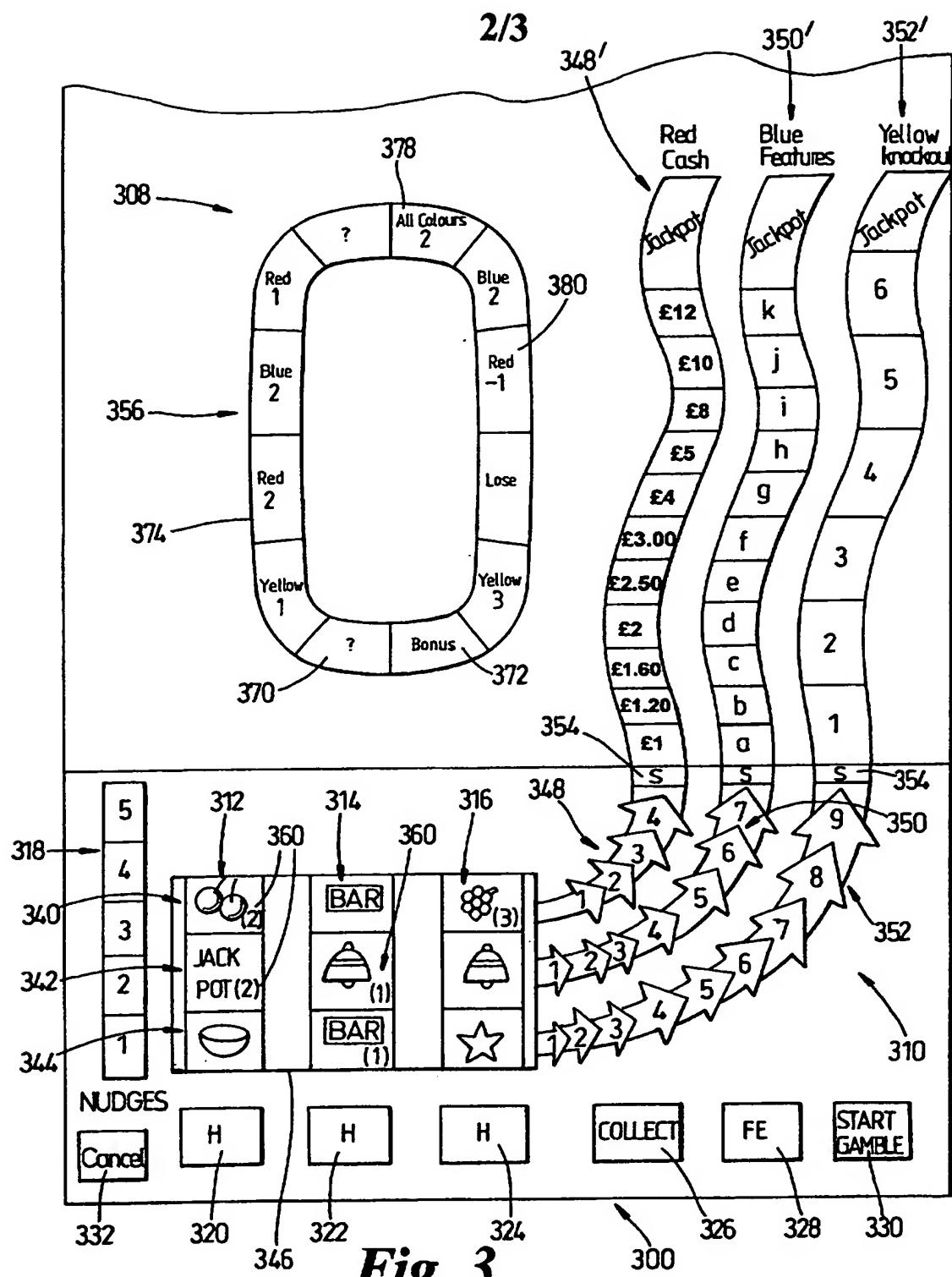


Fig. 3

3/3

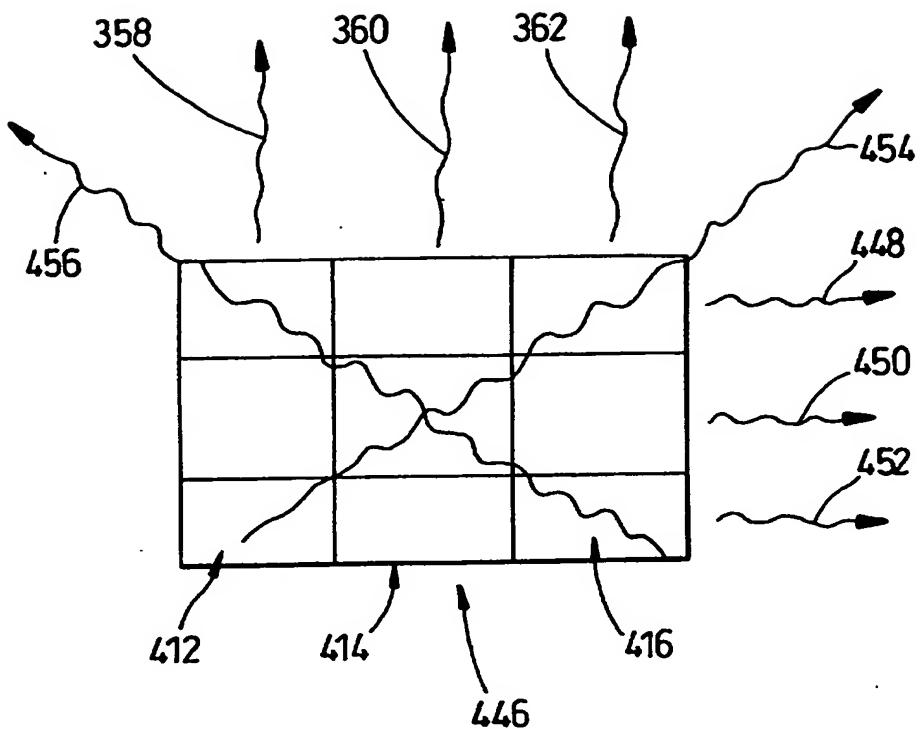


Fig. 4

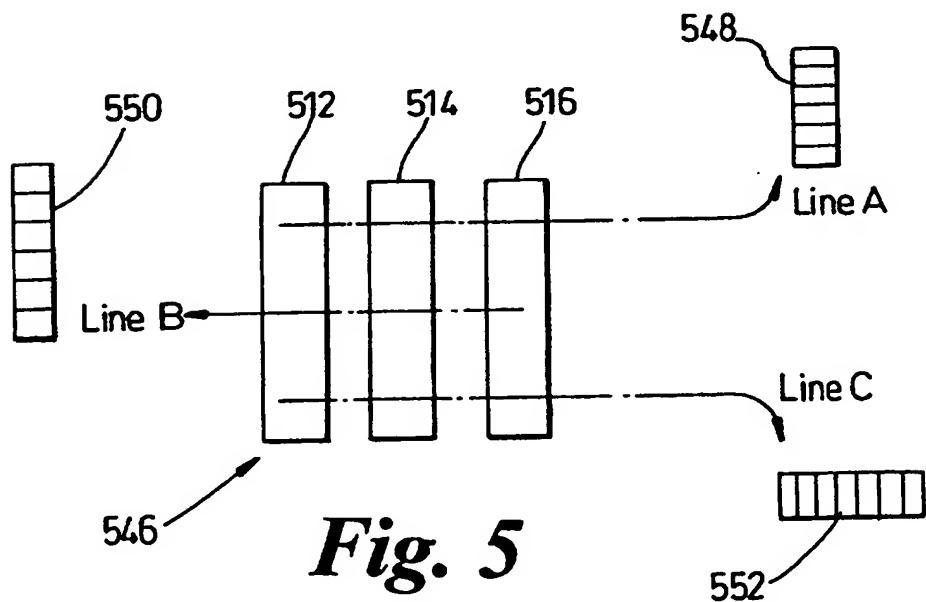


Fig. 5

GAMING AND AMUSEMENT MACHINES

This invention relates to improvements relating to gaming and amusement machines, especially but not exclusively Amusement-with-Prizes (AWP) machines.

It is a common aim to produce a machine that is more interesting to a player. Players play AWP machines to win prizes, but also to be amused: to get value for money. Many games features have been devised over the years.

The aim of some embodiments of the present invention is to increase player interest in playing the machine, and/or to give the player a greater perception of involvement/greater perception that things are happening. It is also an aim to increase the players perception that their tactics and skill will result in a greater chance of winning.

Figure 2 illustrates what we believe to be prior art. A games machine is believed to be known in which three reels, referenced 20, 21 and 22, spin around a horizontal axis and symbols appear in a window having a win line 24, and lines 25 and 26 above and below the win line. The symbols have over printed on them points which move a player along a trail. In fact in the prior art of Figure 2 each reel has its own respective trail 20', 21', 22' and the cumulative points in view from any one reel are added to the trail position that relates to that reel. Thus as shown, trail 20' has three points/moves added to it, trail 21' three moves added, and trail 22' one more added. This is represented by stars 27.

It is, of course, well known to have points overlaid onto the symbols all contributing to a single common trail.

According to a first aspect we provide a gaming or amusement machine having a reel display displaying a portion of at least one reel having a plurality of different symbols; a plurality of trails along which a user can move dependant upon the points awarded to the user attributable to those trails; and a plurality of trail contribution lines in the reel display, each trail contribution line contributing to a respective individual trail.

5

Preferably there are a plurality of reels and the symbols present in each trail contribution line are provided by a plurality of different reels.

10

By "reel" we also intend to cover pseudo reels/video displays simulating reels. Thus individual trail contribution lines spanning different reels contribute to their own individual trails.

15

Preferably the machine has a nudge facility and the trail contribution lines are arranged such that a specific symbol can be nudged from one trail contribution line to another, different, trail contribution line. This is not possible in the machine of Figure 2. This feature is applicable to machines with only one reel, and (more usually) to machines with more

20

than one reel.

Thus the same symbol can contribute to progress along a first trail, and also after nudging it can contribute to a second, different, trail: it can be used twice. Preferably the or each reel has a symbol which contributes in use to a first trail contribution line, and a symbol which contributes in use to a second trail contribution line.

25

Preferably the or each reel contributes a symbol to each trail contribution line. There may be two or more reels, but preferably there are three, or 30 preferably at least three, reels and there are preferably three, or at least three trail contribution lines. The trail contribution lines preferably

extend perpendicular to the plane of rotation of the reel or reels. Preferably the contribution lines include a central line and parallel lines to either side of the central line.

- 5 The trail symbols visible in the reel display may contribute to trails that are to the same side of the reel or reels, or the trails may be on different sides of the reel or reels, possibly on opposite sides of the reel(s). The trails could be remote from the reel(s).
- 10 The symbols may have one or more trail points associated with them (e.g. overprinted/overlaid), or no trail points. It will be appreciated that the symbols may be a trail point indicator. For example, one or more (or all) of the symbols on a reel may simply be a number representative of trail points.
- 15 The trail point symbols need not be a number represented as "1", "2" etc, or indeed need not be a number at all, but could instead be a graphic representative of a number of trail points. For example, a bronze coin could indicate 1 point, a silver coin 2 points, and a gold coin 3 points; or
- 20 a coin 1 point, a gold bar 2 points and a diamond 3 points. The trail points could be represented by a number of dots or markers, possibly in traditional die or domino configurations (e.g. four dots in a square to indicate 4 trail points).
- 25 The machine may have a hold facility and it may be possible for a user to hold a reel, with the reel contributing to more than one trail contribution line.
- 30 The machine preferably has a first game comprising the plurality of trails and a second game, with completion of the first game being an entrance

for the second game. The second game may also have a plurality of trails, and the first game trails may feed into the second game trails.

5 The reel(s) may contribute second game trail contribution lines to the second game trails, which contribution lines may be the same contribution lines as for the first game. The first game may be played on a display panel inclined to the user at a first angle and the second game played on a display panel inclined to the user at a second, different angle.

10 10 The second game may move the player around a track, awarding prizes as the player stops at certain track places. Those prizes may include advancement along a selected one, or more than one, of the top game trails. The prizes may include spinning the reel(s) and having the trail contribution lines of the reel display contribute points for the 15 advancement of the player along a respective top game trail.

20 According to another aspect of the invention we provide a gaming or amusement machine comprising a plurality of trails along which a user can progress and a reel display window displaying an $n \times m$ matrix of reel symbols presented by m reels; and in which a first combination of positions for symbols in the display matrix contributes to a first trail, and different second combination of positions for symbols in the display matrix contributes to a second trail.

25 25 Preferably the positions in the display matrix that comprise the first combination including positions from more than one reel, and the positions that comprise the second combination including positions from more than one reel.

30 30 Preferably the first and/or second combination comprises a straight line of positions in the $n \times m$ display matrix, most preferably a straight line

perpendicular to the plane in which the reels spin. The straight line may be a diagonal line. There may be 1, 2, 3, or more reels.

The first and/or second combination may not be a straight line of places
5 in the display matrix.

According to a third aspect of the invention we provide a method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine having at least one reel comprising having a plurality of trails played
10 simultaneously by the player, with contributions to each trail coming from a respective individual trail combination line, or pattern, presented to the player in the reel display.

Preferably contributions to each trail come from symbols on different
15 reels.

An embodiment of the invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings of which:-

20 **Figure 1** shows an overview of a typical gaming and amusement machine;

Figure 2 shows what is believed to be prior art;

25 **Figure 3** shows a gaming and amusement machine in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 4 shows a modification of the machine of **Figure 3**; and

30 **Figure 5** shows another modification of the machine of **Figure 3**.

Figure 1 shows a coin/token feed amusement-with-prizes (AWP) machine 100 having a housing 102, coin and token pay in slot 104, a payout slot 106, a top game 108, a bottom game 110, three reels 112, 114, 116, a nudge display 118 showing how many nudges the player can 5 use, three hold buttons 120, 122, 124 (one for each reel), a stop/collect button 126, an "exchange for feature" button 128, a start/gamble button 130, and a cancel button 132.

Figure 2 has already been described on page 1.

10

An AWP machine, referenced 300, is shown in Figure 3. It is basically similar to that of Figure 1 and similar components have been given similar numbers (e.g. nudge display 118 of machine 100 becomes nudge display 318 of machine 300, and so on).

15

The three mechanical rotating reels 312, 314, 316 display three horizontal lines 340, 342, and 344 in the reel display window 346. Three bottom game trails 348, 350 and 352 are provided, each corresponding to a respective horizontal line in the reel display. Each bottom trail extends 20 away from the vicinity of a respective symbol position. Each bottom game trail has a number of trail positions (4 in the case of trail 348, 7 for trail 350, and 9 for trail 352) leading to a start level 354 (also referenced "S") where the bottom game trails feed into corresponding respective trails 348' 350' and 352' of the top game 308. Each of the top game 25 trails 348' to 352' has a number of trail positions, each with a respective prize.

Bottom trail 348 is a red trail, as is top trail 348'. Trails 350 and 350' are blue trails, and trails 352 and 352' are yellow trails.

30

The "knockout", yellow top trail 352' enables a player to knock out, or jump over, stages/positions in the other top game trails. For example, if a player were at 3 knockout levels on the yellow trail 352 and at the £2 level on the red trail 348' and they pressed "collect", or the game 5 otherwise came to a winning end, they would jump from the £2 level up three levels on the yellow trail to the £4 level, and £4 would be paid out.

The blue, feature, top trail 350' has a variety of features a to k which can be brought into play (whichever is the highest featured revealed) by the 10 player at their choice and/or by the machine automatically. For example, the features could include "cherry repeater" - the reels are spun and points added to the trails 348' to 352' dependent upon how many points are in the display window 346, and to the respective trail, and so long as there is a cherry in view the player can re-spin the reels and add more to 15 the trails; or "prize scroll" - prize values flash up/are scrolled around and the player stops the scrolling and adds the allocated prize to his score; or "step to nearest win" - the reels move the nearest win, adding that to the players cash score, or any other feature game. A player may be able to play, when he collects, only the prize/feature equivalent to the 20 level to which he has risen on trail 350', or possibly that feature and those features below where he has reached.

The top game 308 also has a "board game" or track 356 which is operative when a player reaches the top game.

25

In order to reach the top game a player must normally progress through the bottom game (although there might be a prize that takes him through to the top game). Each time that a player presses the start button 330 the 30 reels spin and 9 symbols are displayed in the window 346 in a 3x3 matrix. Some of the symbols also have associated with them points 360. In addition to winning whatever prize is on the win line 342 equivalent to

the win line symbols, (e.g. £1 for three cherries) the player is also awarded points for the three trails 348, 350, 352 dependent upon what is showing in the three horizontal lines 340, 342, 344 in the reel display window 346. Points on each line 340, 342, 344 contribute to their 5 respective single trails 348, 350, 352. Thus in the example show in Figure 3, the cherry symbol in line 340 has two points associated with it, the bar symbol none, and the grapes symbol three points. The player advances 5 places along the trail 348 (in fact to the start of the top game). Line 342 contributes to the trail 350 and the Jackpot symbol has two 10 points associated with it, the first bell (on reel 314) one point, and the second bell (on reel 316) no points. The player moves three places along the trail 350. Line 344 contributes to trail 352 and the melon on reel 312 contributes no points, the bar one point, and the star no points. The player advances one point along trail 352.

15

It will be appreciated that the player is playing all three trails 348, 350 and 352 simultaneously.

20 There may, or may not, be the feature that when a player reaches one of the start positions 354 on any one bottom game trail he is automatically advanced to the start position 354 for all of the trails.

25 Nudging is an important aspect of how most embodiments of the present machine increases player interest. The machine 300 awards from time to time a random number of nudges whilst a player is playing the bottom game. Alternatively or additionally symbols on the reels can award nudges if they appear in the correct place in the window 346. The machine 300 only allows a player to nudge the reels downwards (in one direction - it might conceivably be upwards). Since a symbol, and its 30 associated trail points will travel through the horizontal lines 340, 342, 344, the same symbol e.g. the grapes on reel 316, can contribute points to

more than one bottom game trail. For example, if the position of the reels was as shown in Figure 3 and the player had 2 nudges he could either: (a) nudge the grapes (3 points) to line 342, adding 3 points to trail 350, and again nudge it down to line 344 adding 3 points to trail 352; or
5 (b) nudge reel 316 down 1, adding 3 points to trail 350, and nudge reel 312 down one, adding 2 points to trails 350 and 352, or (c) nudge reel 312 down adding 2 points to trail 350 and 2 points to trail 352, and nudge reel 312 down again adding 2 more points to trail 352. Of course other moves are possible, and line 340 (and 342) may gain extra points
10 from as-yet unseen symbols being carried into them. The player therefore has a tactical choice as to whether he prefers to move trail 350 on 5 places (3+2), or 3 places (3+0), or trail 352 on 3 places, or 2 places (2+0). That decision may well be influenced by how far along the trails
15 348 to 352 the player has already progressed, and what extra prizes/events are associated with the advanced positions, and of course the rules of the machine.

In a machine where all three fruits advance to "S", 354, as soon as one trail gets there it may be best tactically to move just one trail along as
20 fast as possible. Since trail 350 is shorter than trail 352, it may be best to move that one on. However, certain positions on the trail may have extra value - for example one of the positions, say position 5 on trail 350 and position 7 on trail 352 may be "bonus" positions where if a player stops on them a bonus feature is played (but not if a player passes over
25 them). Thus a player may choose to move less far along a trail than he could do in order to play the bonus. Balancing advancement along 3 trails, and positioning themselves for the opportunity to win bonus prizes if they stop on a bonus trail position adds for the user a great deal more tactical complexity and interest to playing the game.

Having the same symbol (points associated with that symbol) contribute to more than one trail by nudging it into the contributing positions for a second trail, using it twice (or even 3 times), has a powerful player appeal.

5

Similarly, the hold feature may be randomly or pseudo randomly offered to a player by the machine, and tactical holding of symbols for their trail points, over the three trail-contributing lines, will form a part of a players choices. For example if the player had a "hold" option they 10 might hold reel 316 for the 3 points it will give them to trail 348. They might, or might not, choose to hold reel 312 as well - depending upon whether 3 points on trail 348 was perceived to be better than 5 points/positions of advancement.

15 Whilst it is conventional to allow a player to hold all 3 reels if a hold is offered, and that is what we do, we might instead allow the player to hold less than all 3 reels, for example just one reel (or two reels). The player may then have to decide which single reel gave him the best contribution; bearing in mind the overall tactical position on the trails. The player may 20 be forced to decide if he prefers to hold reel 312 because it advances him 2 places along 2 trails, or reel 316 because it advances him 3 places on one trail.

25 In the embodiment of Figure 3 when a player reaches one of the start positions 354 on the trails 348-352 he is advanced to the start position of all of the trails. He then starts to play the top game 308. When the player presses the gamble button 330 he moves himself around the track 356. This has stop positions which either add places to the position of the player on the top game trails 348', 350' and 352', award other 30 prizes or cause other games to be played (e.g. referenced 370 the "?"

symbol, or referenced 372 the "Bonus" symbol), or which can lose the player his position in the trails 348' to 352'.

5 The player moves around and around the track 356 when playing the top game. It will be noted that some positions on the track contribute only to a single trail. For example position 374 contributes two places to the red trail (trail 348') and nothing to the other trails, and that position 376 contributes 1 place on the yellow trail (352') and nothing to anything else. There may be, or may not be, one or more positions such as 10 position 378 which contributes to more than one trail or to all colours/trails (in this case two positions to all trails). There may or may not be positions such as position 380 which make a negative contribution to one or more trails (in this case back one place on the red trail).

15 The machine from time to time may play whatever feature is illuminated on the blue feature trail. (It will be appreciated that the player's position on the various trails and on the track is indicated by illuminating the appropriate "square".)

20 If a player decides to collect instead of gamble further he presses the collect button and the machine knocks out on the red cash trail however many knock-outs the player has on the yellow knock out, and then pays out the cash or tokens equivalent to the re-adjusted red trail position.

25 It will also be appreciated that a typical bonus event for landing on square 372, and/or a typical mystery event for landing on square 370, will be a spin of the reels 312, 314 and 316, with or without holds.

30 The points displayed on the lines 340, 342, 344 will then, when spinning the reels as part of the top game, contribute to the advancement of the player along the top trails 348', 350' and 352'. Again each line 340 to

344 contributes to its own individual top trail - in this case an extension of the bottom trail. Thus getting three points in line 340 moves a player up 3 places on the red cash trail 348'; getting 1 point in the line 342 moves a player up 1 place in the blue feature trail and getting 1 point in 5 the line 344 moves the player up 1 place in the yellow knockout trail 352'.

The bottom game is thus interacting with the top game during a top game play in the same way that it played the bottom game. This interface 10 between the bottom game and the top game is also attractive to players, especially using the same intuitive rules.

Of course, if a player gets a prize-winning combination of actual symbols in the win line (e.g. 3 bars) the cash prize is typically added to their cash 15 trail position (or added to a cash bank (not shown)).

Whilst most gaming and amusement machines have three reels there could be less (e.g. 2 reels), or more. For example 4 or 5 reel machines are known.

20

In an alternative embodiment the reels can be nudged both up and down. This gives even greater tactical possibilities, including nudging a symbol (and its associated points value) off a line and back onto the same line - so that it counts again for the line that it was previously on.

25

Whilst we have described a conventional "fruit machine" with three mechanical reels spinning in a vertical plane about a horizontal axis we do not want to be limited to that arrangement. The reels could conceivably spin horizontally about a vertical axis. Indeed, in a video 30 display machine with non-mechanical, electrically simulated, reels they

could easily be made to spin vertically or horizontally. Indeed they may not "spin" at all - the images may change but without appearing to spin.

5 In preferred embodiments the trails are fed by respective lines of symbols in a reel window, the contributing symbols for a trail line being on different reels. The trail lines may extend in a direction transverse, preferably generally perpendicular, to the plane in which the reels spin.

10 Figure 4 illustrates the possibility of having a reel window 446 with reels 412, 414, and 416, in view, and with trails 448, 450, 452 extending perpendicularly away from the reels. It is also possible to have a fourth trail 454, and/or a fifth trail 456, those trails being contributed to by the diagonally aligned symbols in the 3 x 3 matrix on display.

15 We could also have vertical trails referenced 358, 360, 362. These would not have contributions from symbols from different reels and the enhanced nudging and holding tactics for trails 358, 360, 362, and would not be so interesting, but they could be provided in addition to either the 20 diagonal trail lines, or the horizontal trail lines, or both the diagonal and horizontal trail lines. Having 9 symbols contribute to 8 different trail lines will increase the complexity for players, especially having the same symbol contributing to more than one trail line, and especially doing so if it is nudged.

25 Figure 5 shows another reel display, referenced 546 having three reels 512, 514, and 516. It has the top line in the display 546, line A, contributing to a first trail 548, the second, middle, line, line B, contributing to a second trail 550, and the third, lower, line, line C, 30 contributing to a third trail 552. Trails 548 and 552 are to one side of the

reel display 546, and trail 550 is to the other side. This may allow more space for the trails on the games panel of the machine.

One trail to one side of the reels may extend upwards (e.g. trail 548).

5 Another trail (e.g. trail 552) to the same side of the reels and said one trail may extend in a different direction, such as downwards (opposite direction to said one trail) or at right angles to said one trail. A trail to the other side of the reels to said one trail may extend in the same direction as said one trail, or in a different direction, possibly in the 10 opposite direction or at right angles to the direction of said one trail. Said one trail may extend generally horizontally or vertically (upwards or downwards).

It will be appreciated that the trails do not need to start near to the reels,

15 nor be linked to them by lines on the games panel of the machine. Similarly, the bottom game trails do not have to feed directly into/flow into the top game trails; there can be a disjointed break/no visual lead-in from one to the other.

20 It will also be appreciated that whilst it is preferable to have trails contributed to by straight lines of symbols a machine can be envisaged where a trail is contributed to by non-straight line symbols (e.g. the four corner symbols, or the central cross of symbols (five symbols), or perhaps a player selected combination of places in the display matrix, 25 which selection of contributing "squares" may or may not carry forward to future spins of the reels).

A further refinement could be to have the points on the reels be associated with a particular trail, possibly/optionally even when they are 30 not on that trail-line contribution line in the reel display window. For example some of the points could be coloured red, others yellow, and

others blue. They could then not only contribute to the trail to which the line 340, 342, or 344 contributes, but also to the red, blue and yellow trails (348, 348'; 350, 350'; 352, 352') as appropriate. This could happen only when a certain feature is in play, or more widely. Thus a 5 yellow 2 at the top left hand corner of display 346 could contribute two places to the red trail (348, 348') (because it is on line 340) and (or) 2 places to the yellow trail 352, 352'.

One specific example of symbols being associated with particular trails is 10 that a first trail could be contributed to the right of the reel(s), and a second trail contributed to the left of the reel(s), and that the trail point symbols could have an indicia allocating them to one or other of the trails (e.g. an arrow to the left allocating the trail points to count only to the left trail, or an arrow to the right allocating those particular trail points to 15 the right trail). Undirected trail points, or trail points with more than one trail allocation, could contribute to more than one trail.

CLAIMS

1. A gaming or amusement machine having a reel display displaying a portion of at least one reel having a plurality of different symbols; a plurality of trails along which a user can move dependant upon the points awarded to the user attributable to those trails; and a plurality of trail contribution lines in the reel display, each trail contribution line contributing to a respective individual trail.
5
- 10 2. A machine according to claim 1 in which there are a plurality of reels and in which the symbols present in each trail contribution line are provided by a plurality of different reels.
- 15 3. A machine according to claim 1 or claim 2 which has a nudge facility and in which the trail contribution lines are arranged such that a specific symbol can be nudged from one trail contribution line to another, different, trail contribution line.
- 20 4. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the or each reel has a symbol which contributes to a first trail contribution line, and a symbol which contributes to a second trail contribution line.
5. A machine according to claim 4 in which the or each reel contributes a symbol to each trail contribution line.
25
6. A machine according to any preceding claim in which there are three, or at least three, reels and there are three, or at least three, trail contribution lines.

7. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the trail contribution lines extend substantially perpendicular to the plane of rotation of the reels.

5 8. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the trail contribution lines include a central line and lines to either side of the central line.

9. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the machine
10 has a hold facility and in which it is possible for a user to hold a reel, with the reel contributing to more than one trail contribution line.

10. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the machine has a first game comprising the reel or a plurality of trails and a second game, with completion of the first game being an entrance for the second game.

11. A machine according to claim 10 in which the second game has a plurality of trails, and the first game trails feed into the second game trails.

20

12. A machine according to claim 11 in which the reel or reels contribute second game trail contribution lines to the second game trails.

25 13. A machine according to claim 12 in which the second game contribution lines are the same contribution lines as for the first game.

14. A machine according to any one of claims 10 to 13 in which the second game moves the player around a track, awarding prizes as the
30 player stops at certain track places.

15. A machine according to claim 14 in which the prizes include spinning the reel or reels and having the trail contribution lines of the reel display contribute points for the advancement of the player along respective second game trails.

5

16. A machine according to any preceding claim in which there are three reels rotatable about a generally horizontal axis, and in which the reel display displays a generally horizontal central win line, and a line above that and a line below that, the three generally horizontal lines each 10 comprising respective trail contribution lines and each having a symbol contributed by each of the reels.

17. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the trails extend away, visually, from a region of the reel display adjacent their 15 respective contribution lines.

18. A gaming or amusement machine comprising a plurality of trails along which a user can progress and a reel display window displaying an $n \times m$ matrix of reel symbols presented by m reels; and in which a first 20 combination of positions for symbols in the display matrix contributes to a first trail, and different second combination of positions for symbols in the display matrix contributes to a second trail.

19. A machine according to claim 18 in which there are a plurality of 25 reels and in which the positions in the display matrix that comprise the first combination include positions from more than one reel, and the positions that comprise the second combination including positions from more than one reel.

20. A machine according to claim 18 or claim 19 in which the first and/or second combination comprises a straight line of positions in the nxm display matrix.

5 21. A machine according to claim 20 in which the first and/or second combination comprises a straight line perpendicular to the plane in which the reel or reels spin.

10 22. A machine according to claim 21 in which the straight line is a diagonal line.

23. A machine according to claim 18 or claim 19 in which the first and/or second combination is not a straight line of places in the display matrix.

15 24. A method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine having at least one reel comprising having a plurality of trails played simultaneously by the player, with contributions to each trail coming from a respective individual trail combination line, or pattern, 20 presented to the player in the reel display.

25. A method according to claim 24, in which more than one reel is used and in which contributions to at least one trail, or to each trail, come from symbols on different reels.

25 26. A gaming or amusement machine substantially as described and illustrated with reference to Figures 1, 3, 4, or 5 of the accompanying drawings.

27. A method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine substantially as described herein with reference to Figures 1, 3, 4, or 5 of the accompanying drawings.

Amendments to the claims have been filed as follows

1. A gaming or amusement machine having a reel display displaying a portion of at least one reel having a plurality of different symbols; a plurality of trails along which a user can move dependant upon the points awarded to the user attributable to those trails; and a plurality of trail contribution lines in the reel display, each trail contribution line contributing to a respective individual trail, and in which said at least one reel has a symbol which is, in use, capable of contributing to more than one trail contribution line.
2. A machine according to claim 1 in which there are a plurality of reels and in which the symbols present in each trail contribution line are provided by a plurality of different reels.
3. A machine according to claim 1 or claim 2 which has a nudge facility and in which the trail contribution lines are arranged such that a specific symbol can be nudged from one trail contribution line to another, different, trail contribution line.
4. A machine according to any preceding claim in which there are a plurality of reels and in which each reel has a symbol which is capable in use of contributing to a first trail contribution line, and a symbol which is capable in use of contributing to a second trail contribution line.
5. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the or each reel is in use capable of contributing a symbol to each trail contribution line.
- 30 6. A machine according to any preceding claim in which there are three, or at least three, reels and there are three, or at least three, trail contribution lines.

7. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the trail contribution lines extend substantially perpendicular to the plane of rotation of the reels.

5

8. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the trail contribution lines include a central line and lines to either side of the central line.

10 9. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the machine has a hold facility and in which it is possible for a user to hold a reel, with the reel contributing to more than one trail contribution line.

15 10. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the machine has a first game comprising the reel or a plurality of trails and a second game, with completion of the first game being an entrance for the second game.

20 11. A machine according to claim 10 in which the second game has a plurality of trails, and the first game trails feed into the second game trails.

12. A machine according to claim 11 in which the reel or reels contribute second game trail contribution lines to the second game trails.

25

13. A machine according to claim 12 in which the second game contribution lines are the same contribution lines as for the first game.

30

14. A machine according to any one of claims 10 to 13 in which the second game moves the player around a track, awarding prizes as the player stops at certain track places.

15. A machine according to claim 14 in which the prizes include spinning the reel or reels and having the trail contribution lines of the reel display contribute points for the advancement of the player along respective second game trails.

5

16. A machine according to any preceding claim in which there are three reels rotatable about a generally horizontal axis, and in which the reel display displays a generally horizontal central win line, and a line about that and a line below that, the three generally horizontal lines each comprising respective trail contribution lines and each having a symbol contributed by each of the reels.

17. A machine according to any preceding claim in which the trails extend away, visually, from a region of the reel display adjacent their respective contribution lines.

15

18. A machine according to any preceding claim in which a single symbol at a single position in the reel display is capable of contributing simultaneously to more than one trail line.

20

19. A machine according to any preceding claim in which a single symbol in a first position in the display is capable of contributing to one trail line, and in which that same symbol when in a different position in the display is capable of contributing to a second, different, trail line.

25

20. A gaming or amusement machine comprising a plurality of trails along which a user can progress and a reel display window displaying an nxm matrix of reel symbols presented by m reels; and in which a first combination of positions of symbols in the display matrix contributes to a first trail, and different second combination of positions for symbols in the display matrix contributes to a second trail, and in which the symbols

30

on at least one reel are capable of contributing, in use, to more than one trail contribution line.

21. A machine according to claim 20 in which there are a plurality of 5 reels and in which the positions in the display matrix that comprise the first combination include positions from more than one reel, and the positions that comprise the second combination including positions from more than one reel.

10 22. A machine according to claim 20 or claim 21 in which there are a plurality of reels and in which each reel has symbols that are capable, in use, of contributing to more than one trail line.

15 23. A machine according to any one of claims 20 to 22 in which the first and/or second combination comprises a straight line of positions in the nxm display matrix.

20 24. A machine according to claim 23 in which the first and/or second combination comprises a straight line perpendicular to the plane in which the reel or reels spin.

25 25. A machine according to claim 23, in which the straight line is a diagonal line.

26. A machine according to any one of claims 20 to 22 in which the first and/or second combination is not a straight line of places in the display matrix.

30 27. A method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine having at least one reel comprising having a plurality of trails played simultaneously by the player, with contributions to each trail

coming from a respective individual trial combination line, or pattern, presented to the player in the reel display, and in which symbols on the reel contribute to more than one trail.

5 28. A method according to claim 27 in which more than one reel is used and in which contributions to at least one trail, or to each trail, come from symbols on different reels.

10 29. A method according to claim 27 or claim 28 in which a plurality of reels are used in which each reel has symbols which are capable of contributing to more than one trail, either simultaneously or at different times.

15 30. A gaming or amusement machine substantially as described and illustrated with reference to Figures 1, 3, 4, or 5 of the accompanying drawings.

20 31. A method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine substantially as described herein with reference to Figures 1, 3, 4, or 5 of the accompanying drawings.



Application No: GB 0021553.3
Claims searched: All

Examiner: Michael Logan
Date of search: 29 November 2000

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.R): G4V

Int Cl (Ed.7): G07F 17/32, 17/34

Other: Online: WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	GB 2333880 A (BARCREST) whole document relevant	18
A	GB 2230373 A (BELL-FRUIT)	

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.